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SUBJECT: Inauguration of El Fasher DPA Implementation Office

Ref: Khartoum 01933

11. (U) SUMMARY: The El Fasher DPA Implementation Office opened officially on September 17. Fully staffing the Peace Secretariat, guiding its operation, and maximizing its potential role in facilitating implementation activities are challenges that must be confronted in the weeks ahead. END SUMMARY.

El Fasher DPA Implementation Office Opens

12. (U) Roughly one month following the official opening of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) Implementation Office (also known as Peace Secretariat) in Khartoum (reftel), the African Union (AU) inaugurated a parallel office in El Fasher on September 17. Roughly forty persons attended the event, including members from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and National Intelligence and Security Services, North Darfur government officials, SLA-Minawi and other DPA/Declaration of Commitment (DOC) signatories, UN officials, NGO representatives, AMIS and AU personnel, civil society leaders, local press, and USG officials.

AU Notes Long Road Ahead in Implementing DPA

13. (U) Active Response Corps (ARC) Officer moderated the ceremony, introducing the keynote speakers. AU Deputy Head of Mission Ambassador Hassan Gibril delivered opening remarks, noting the long process that culminated in the DPA and, perhaps, the longer road ahead in implementing the accord. He thanked a number of individuals and organizations that contributed to the establishment of the DPA, expressing particular gratitude to the U.S. Government for its financial, technical, and human resource support.

GNU, SLM/Minawi Cite Backing for DPA, Need for Peace

14. (U) Standing in for the Wali of North Darfur, State Minister of Humanitarian and Social Affairs Ahmed Saleh Ahmed emphasized the GNU's backing for the DPA and its hopes for peace in Darfur. (Note: The Wali's absence was not unexpected, according to AU officials. Also present at the ceremony was the Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner (HAC), who frequently serves as the State government's interface with the international community, and SAF representative to the Ceasefire Commission General Abdullah Mubarak. End note.) On behalf of the SLA-Minawi faction, Adam Ali War spoke extemporaneously in English about the significance of the Peace Secretariat and its potential value in aiding implementation of the

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DPA. Like previous speakers, he thanked the U.S. Government for its extensive support of SLA-Minawi and the peace process and

underscored the importance of gaining the buy-in of non-signatories to the peace agreement.

DCM Powers Underscores USG Role in Supporting DPA

¶5. (U) Finally, U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Roberto Powers delivered remarks highlighting the U.S. Government's role in the Darfur peace process and our continued commitment to improving the humanitarian situation in the region. He congratulated the DPA signatories for their willingness to work toward peace, and articulated the U.S. position in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1706.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) While the DPA Implementation Office is fully equipped, funded through the end of the year, and ready to be occupied, it may take some weeks for the Office to find its niche. The AU reports no progress in its appeals to Addis Ababa to provide at least two political affairs officers to staff the relevant "desks" in the El Fasher Peace Secretariat. Ambassador Gibril's civilian political staff currently consists of only two individuals, who are frequently occupied with administrative or representational tasks rather than focusing on political, humanitarian, or security developments. These officers are unlikely to be capable of devoting the energy or time necessary to effectively advance the mission and role of the DPA Implementation Office. The UK media team (DPA outreach) arrived several weeks ago in El Fasher, and will work out of the new office.

Production problems with a number of DPA products (e.g., illustrated explanations of the DPA) have delayed their strategic communications timeline, though the Peace Secretariat stands to fill an important function in hosting outreach events and coordinating

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the implementation efforts of various stakeholders.

¶7. (SBU) The AU continues to consider an "Implementation Coordination" concept paper provided by ARC Officer last month; to date, there have been no meetings in El Fasher of the AU-led DPA Implementation Team (DPAIT), despite repeated exhortations by ARC Officer. It also remains unclear who the SLA-Minawi faction will nominate to be its representative for the Peace Secretariat, indicating to ARC Officer that it is looking for guidance from its leadership in Khartoum. Encouraging the AU to take ownership, initiative, and charge of the DPA Implementation Office and pushing the other signatories to fully participate will remain a challenge in the weeks ahead. END COMMENT.

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